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# *Office of Legislative Auditor*

Grover C. Austin, CPA, First Assistant Legislative Auditor

Louisiana State University  
Agricultural Center



## Performance Measures

October 2003

Audit Control # 03003532

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To address the provisions of Louisiana Revised Statute (R.S.) 39:87.3, we review and report on the performance data of various state agencies throughout the year and compile a summary report of all results annually. This report gives the results of our examination of the performance data reported for the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center for fiscal year 2002.

- The nine performance indicators we reviewed are valid. However, the presentation of the performance information makes it difficult for users of the information to determine whether the information relates to research and/or extension services.
- For all nine indicators, the AgCenter's management controls do not provide assurance that data used to report the indicator values are accurate and reliable.
  - The reported values for five of the nine indicators (55.6%) are not reliable.
  - We were unable to determine whether the remaining four indicator values (44.4%) are reliable because of a lack of source documentation.

Our results are summarized in Exhibit 1 on page 2. The Louisiana State University Agricultural Center concurs with the findings in this report. A summary of the AgCenter's response has been incorporated into this report. The AgCenter's complete response can be viewed separately at our Web site ([www.lla.state.la.us](http://www.lla.state.la.us)).

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Grover C. Austin".

Grover C. Austin, CPA  
First Assistant Legislative Auditor

**Exhibit 1**

**Louisiana State University Agricultural Center  
Objectives and Performance Indicators Reviewed and Summary of Results  
Fiscal Year 2002**

<b>Objectives</b>	<b>Performance Indicators</b>	<b>Target</b>	<b>Value Reported</b>	<b>Valid</b>	<b>Reliable</b>
1. To maintain and support the competitiveness and sustainability of the state's renewable natural resource based industries (agriculture, forestry, and fisheries) by holding the average adoption rate for recommended cultural and best management practice	• Average adoption rate for recommendation	73.09 %	77.34 %	YES	NO
	• Percentage increase in average adoption rate for recommendations over previous year	0 %	5.8 %	YES	NO
2. To facilitate the development of an effective and informed community citizenry by maintaining membership in 4-H youth development programs	• Number of 4-H members	84,698	81,595	YES	NO
	• Percentage increase in 4-H members over previous year	0 %	-3.7 %	YES	NO
3. To maintain the quality of life and services in local communities and the health and well-being of the state's citizens by continuing educational program contact at the FY 2000-2001 level through fiscal year 2001-2002	• Number of volunteer leaders	9,360	18,575	YES	NO
	• Number of 4-H participants in community service activities	38,900	37,455	YES	Unable to Determine
	• Number of educational contacts	824,841	1,436,331	YES	Unable to Determine
	• Percentage increase in the number of educational contacts over previous year	0 %	7.3 %	YES	Unable to Determine
	• Number of educational programs	5,566	1,516	YES	Unable to Determine

**Note:** Key performance indicators are shown in **bold**.

**Source:** Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data obtained from the Louisiana Performance Accountability System and our analysis of the performance indicators.

## Background

The mission of the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center (the AgCenter) is to enhance the quality of life for people through research and educational programs that develop the best use of natural resources, conserve and protect the environment, enhance development of existing and new agricultural and related enterprises, develop human and community resources, and fulfill the acts of authorization and mandates of state and federal legislative bodies. The AgCenter provides three major services: Research, Cooperative Extension Service, and International Programs.

Exhibit 2 shows the amounts expended and the number of employees for fiscal year 2002 for Research and Cooperative Extension Services as well as for the entire AgCenter.

Exhibit 2 Louisiana State University AgCenter Expenditure and Employee Information Fiscal Year 2002		
Services	Expenditures	Employees
Research	\$40,450,271	264
Cooperative Extension	31,375,205	673
<b>Subtotal</b>	<b>\$71,825,476</b>	<b>937</b>
Other services	11,877,123*	695**
<b>AgCenter TOTAL</b>	<b>\$83,702,599</b>	<b>1,632</b>
*Includes International Programs, academic support, institutional support, libraries, and operation and maintenance of plant.		
**Includes administrative, classified, and professional - other than academic employees.		
Source: Prepared by legislative auditor's staff using data obtained from the LSU AgCenter and the LSU System Board of Regents (BOR-4) Report.		

## Validity

### Are the performance indicators valid?

We determined that all nine of the performance indicators we reviewed are valid. However, the presentation of the performance information makes it difficult for users to determine whether the information relates to research and/or extension. In addition, we determined that there are no indicators that represent International Programs. *The AgCenter concurs with this finding and will revise performance data wording to better inform users of the information.*

The validity of a performance indicator is determined by whether it is suitable for its intended use. The factors we used to gauge the validity of the AgCenter's indicators include whether they are relevant to the AgCenter's missions, goals, and objectives and whether the mission is comparable to and reflective of the AgCenter's legal authority. In addition, we determined whether the indicators can be linked to a major function of the AgCenter.

## Reliability and Management Controls

### Do management controls provide assurance that the reported performance indicator values are reliable?

We found that the reported values for five of the performance indicators we reviewed (55.6%) are not reliable.

We were unable to determine whether the values for the remaining four indicators (44.4%) were accurately computed.

Therefore, we were unable to determine whether they are reliable. *The AgCenter concurs with these findings and agreed to develop policies and procedures to ensure the accuracy and reliability of reported performance indicator values. In addition, the AgCenter agreed to revise performance information wording to better inform users of the information.*

Management controls include policies and procedures that management has implemented to ensure that data are accurate. We reviewed controls over the input, processing, and review of the data used to compile the values of the AgCenter's performance indicators.

Overall, we found that the controls do not provide assurance that the data used to report performance indicator values are accurate and reliable. We found that the only formal written policies and procedures that exist are for collecting and compiling data for the indicators under objectives 2 and 3. However, there are no procedures in place for the processing or review of these data. The only other documentation the AgCenter has for collecting and reporting performance indicator data is informal written instructions in the form of a letter for the first indicator under objective 1. No other formal policies or procedures are in place for the objective 1 performance indicators.

### ***Five Performance Indicator Values Are Not Reliable***

The first two performance indicators for which the values are not reliable are under objectives 1 and 2 on page 2. These indicators are as follows:

- *Percentage increase in average adoption rate for recommendations over previous year (objective 1)*
- *Percentage increase in 4-H members over previous year (objective 2)*

These performance indicators should compare the prior year actual figures to the current year actual figures. However, the AgCenter compared the current year actual figures to the current year target figures instead. AgCenter officials said that they used these figures because they were unaware that the phrase "over previous year" was added onto the indicator during the fiscal year 2002 budget process. Thus, the AgCenter thought that the indicator was measuring the percentage increase from the target figure to the actual figure. However, the AgCenter approved the wording change. Therefore, the AgCenter should have realized that the indicator value should have been computed differently.

The third performance indicator for which the value is not reliable is under objective 1 on page 2. This indicator is as follows:

- *Average adoption rate for recommendation*

The value for this indicator is unreliable because the surveys of agricultural producers that the AgCenter used to compile the indicator value may not have been a direct reflection of practices resulting from recommendations made by the AgCenter.

That is, the surveys did not ask the producers whether the practices they adopted were the result of the AgCenter's recommendations; therefore, the producers could have obtained best practices information from sources other than the AgCenter. In addition, we found that the AgCenter's survey process, which is based on sampling procedures, is not rigorous or well-documented. Finally, we found that the AgCenter officials responsible for compiling the indicator value made calculation errors and did not coordinate with each other to compile the value.

The fourth and fifth performance indicators for which the values are not reliable are under objective 2 on page 2. These indicators are as follows:

- *Number of 4-H members*
- *Number of volunteer leaders*

These indicator values are not reliable because we could not replicate the number of 4-H members or volunteer leaders that are recorded in LaPAS using the AgCenter's methodology and source documentation. For instance, we calculated 62,772 4-H members as opposed to the 81,595 that is recorded in LaPAS. The LaPAS figure is 23.07% higher than the figure we calculated. According to AgCenter officials, the difference is due to the AgCenter including participants (non-members who take part in 6 hours or more of 4-H program activities per month) from six parishes in the total submitted to LaPAS. The AgCenter did not include participants from the other parishes because those data were not available at the time. The officials further stated that the indicator really should be named "Number of 4-H

members and participants" and should include both 4-H members and participants.

The AgCenter also could not provide us with reliable supporting data for the "*Number of Volunteer Leaders*." We calculated 16,181 volunteer leaders based on data the AgCenter provided to us during our fieldwork as opposed to the 18,575 that is reported in LaPAS. The LaPAS figure is 12.89% higher than the figure we calculated. According to AgCenter officials, 23 parishes either did not report any numbers or did not report the correct numbers at the time the 2002 figure needed to be entered into LaPAS.

Accordingly, they estimated amounts for those parishes in the LaPAS total. After our fieldwork was completed, AgCenter officials were able to compile amounts for most of the parishes that had not correctly reported for 2002. Nevertheless, the figure in LaPAS remains inaccurate, thus the indicator value remains unreliable.

In addition, it is unclear to users of the performance information exactly what is included in the "Number of volunteer leaders" indicator. We learned that the value for this indicator can include 4-H youth leaders as well as adult volunteer leaders. Including an explanatory note for the "Number of volunteer leaders" indicator would assist users in understanding that some 4-H members may be included in both the "Number of 4-H members" and the "Number of volunteer leaders."

#### ***We Could Not Determine the Reliability of Four Performance Indicator Values***

The first performance indicator for which we could not determine the reliability of its indicator value is under objective 2 on page 2. This indicator is as follows:

- *Number of 4-H participants in community service activities*

We were not able to determine the reliability of this indicator value because of incomplete source data and calculation errors. The AgCenter official responsible for computing the indicator value used total data reported by parish agents without verifying the data. Twelve of the 64 parishes submitted incomplete reports to the AgCenter. Therefore, we could not determine the reliability of these parishes' totals, which were used to calculate the indicator value.

The remaining 52 parishes submitted complete reports. We sampled 18 of these parishes and found errors in three (16.67%) of them. The errors we found were a total of 2.76% different than the data used to report the indicator value in LaPAS. In addition, the person who calculated the indicator value found another error for a parish that was not included in our sample.

The other three indicators for which we could not determine reliability of the values are under objective 3 on page 2. These indicators are as follows:

- *Number of educational contacts*
- *Percentage increase in the number of educational contacts over previous year*
- *Number of educational programs*

We could not determine whether the values for these indicators are reliable because we could not verify the electronic data used to calculate them.

These indicator values are calculated using electronic data entered into the Louisiana Cooperative Extension Service (LCES) Planning and Reporting System (PARS) by parish agents. The parish agents did not maintain complete documentation of the contacts and programs they entered into PARS because they are not required to do so. Instead, they estimated the number of contacts they entered into PARS, which can include telephone calls, site visits, and seminars, using mostly notations they made in their personal calendars and their memories.

The agents also grouped multiple educational programs that addressed the same teaching plan and objectives together into single data entries, making it difficult to identify the programs that comprise each entry.

In addition, Southern University AgCenter's agent educational contacts and programs are also reported in PARS and were therefore included in these performance indicator values. We found that 5% of the educational contacts included in the LSU AgCenter indicator value are actually from the Southern University AgCenter agents who work in the same office as the LSU agents. The Southern University AgCenter also reports its educational contacts and programs in its own indicators. The LCES is comprised of agents from both the LSU and Southern University agricultural centers. The Southern University parish agents are supervised by both Southern University and LSU employees. However, in the absence of explanatory information, only one university should include the data from Southern University agents in its performance indicator values.

## **Other Matters**

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The 4-H indicators under objective 2 on page 2 include federal Expanded Food and Nutrition Education Program (EFNEP) data, which includes some Southern University AgCenter data. However, unlike the three indicators related to educational contacts and programs discussed in the previous section, the Southern University AgCenter does not report any 4-H activity in its own indicators.

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**Need more information?**

Contact Grover Austin, First Assistant Louisiana Legislative Auditor  
at (225) 339-3800.

A copy of this report is available at our Web site ([www.lla.state.la.us](http://www.lla.state.la.us)).

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October 10, 2003

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RE: Louisiana State University Agricultural Center Performance Measures

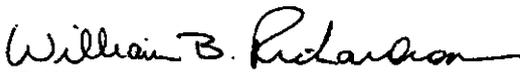
Dear Mr. Austin:

The LSU AgCenter concurs with the results of the Office of the Legislative Auditor's report of the examination of the Louisiana State University Agricultural Center Performance Measures for the fiscal year 2002.

As recommended by the review team, performance indicators wording will be revised to better inform readers. Additionally, current policies and procedures will be revised to insure accuracy and reliability of reported performance indicator values.

If you have any questions, you may contact me or Mark Legendre at (225) 578-4161. I would like to thank you and your staff for their professionalism during the examination.

Sincerely,

  
 William B. Richardson  
 Chancellor & Chalkley Family Endowed Chair

WBR/gg

c: President William B. Jenkins  
 Mr. Mark Legendre

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